

EDITORIAL  
The Blessings in Conflict

FEATURE  
Local Pastor Ministers to Police and  
First Responders

NEWS  
Community Students Attend  
Adventist School

# Memo

INFORMING MEMBERS SINCE 1988

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# The Blessings in Conflict

## The Hall of Fame

Individuals who achieve significant accomplishments in sports, music, acting, or academics may be honored by being inducted into the Hall of Fame, a privilege reserved for those with exceptional skills and achievements.

In contrast, the Bible does not feature a Hall of Fame, but Paul does describe something that resembles a Hall of Faith. While the world celebrates human achievements, the Bible focuses on what can be achieved when individuals cooperate with God. The Hall of Faith consists of individuals who live by faith and have allowed God to work in them to such a point where they are “anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make their request known to God” (Phil. 4:6).



Jim Micheff

## How Faith Grows

The kind of faith described above usually emerges through conflict, when one encounters situations requiring total dependence on God.

Active, living faith navigates us to the intersection of God’s promises and life’s realities, particularly during traumatic and challenging circumstances. In our journey,

we have the privilege of experiencing joy, peace, satisfaction, and contentment radiating from God’s presence.

It is by facing trials that our faith can grow to maturity, this is why we are encouraged to consider it a joy to face trials, “knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience,” and once the work of patience is complete, we will attain maturity in faith, “lacking nothing” (See James 1:2-4).

## Dealing with Personal Conflict

How do we respond when dealing with leaders in the workplace or church who insist on their own way? How do we cope with challenging situations like serious illness, the unexpected death of a loved one, job loss, or being taken advantage of?

Whatever the reasons that cause conflict, we tend to migrate to those who sympathize or agree with us. Often nursing our own hurts and rehearsing

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MICHIGAN  
Memo

grievances, we refuse to consider that although God may not have approved the method, He did allow it. If we continue to struggle with the outcome and rehearse and meditate on “if only” he or she had done “this or that” the situation would have been different, then we will find ourselves on a spiral journey downward into blame, depression, doubt, bitterness and unconsciously condemning God for not protecting us from the source of our pain. All that leads to weakening our relationship with God.

Satisfaction and contentment, regardless of circumstances, doesn't come naturally or by chance. They are developed through experience. As Paul states in Philippians 4:11, he learned to be content in any situation. Trusting God in the face of seemingly impossible situations is not an accidental development. It's cultivated over time.

Paul also said, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” The battle for victory takes place in our minds. Our thoughts guide our responses in life. As Proverbs 23:7 suggests, “As a man thinks in his heart so is he.” This process involves choosing what we will dwell upon. Refusing to meditate on negative thoughts requires divine assistance. Psalms 91:1 says that “he who dwells in the secret place of the Most High abides under the shadow of the Almighty.” God invites us to reason together with Him in that secret place where we do our thinking. Here is where God infuses divine power to transform our minds. Then our focus shifts from personal hurts to trusting God, seeking His wisdom and guidance for the future.

Our instinct is often to doubt, and worry is essentially doubting God's ability or desire to help. We are counseled to communicate our needs and entrust all our cares to God. The peace that emanates from God will guard our emotions and thoughts. The original Greek text where this thought is taken from implies that this peace safeguards our hearts like a squad of soldiers guarding a town.

When we choose to reject negative thoughts and accept whatever has occurred, regardless of its unfairness, trusting God to bring good out of the horrible and painful situation, God will then uplift and sustain us, granting us peace and purpose. This difficult experience draws us closer to God, contributing to the transformation of our character.

## God's Plan

Our perception of God greatly influences our response to conflict. Even without full understanding of a situation, we must acknowledge God's supreme authority and believe that, even though He did not orchestrate the events, He will turn Satan's plans into a blessing. God promises to not let us face trials beyond our capacity and always considers our best interests when allowing certain experiences in our lives.

We understand that God has promised to transform every negative action of the devil into something positive in our preparation for heaven. If we know that the conflict we face could act as a catalyst in preparing us or our family for heaven, would we wish God prevented it? I believe that we would do everything within our power to ensure our family would be in heaven, even at the cost of our own life on earth.

God's plan has already considered the freewill choices of both angels and humans. While He doesn't override the freewill of anyone, He still brings His plans into fruition. Nothing can remove us from God's ultimate plan; thus, anything that happens to us has been considered and allowed by Him. Understanding and accepting God's plan allows us to rest in complete trust, knowing God will bring good out of whatever dire situation we face. Praying “Thy will be done” is challenging, as it means surrendering our will to God and accepting His will, even when it contradicts ours.

The best place to be is “under the shadow of the Almighty.” I believe with all my heart that God is preparing us to be a mighty force in this world's final events. Friend, God wants to use you, too. If you are experiencing one of the fiery trials of life right now, I encourage you to stop trying to analyze how or why you're in your current situation. Instead, trust in the Lord and pray for those who have hurt you and your family. Focus on the future and the imminent return of Christ. Ask God to instill in you a willingness to accept His plan for your life, to reveal it, and empower you to follow it. Pray for Him to continue transforming you into His image. God can use you as a source of inspiration, strength, and encouragement to your family and your wider community. In this world of conflict, I praise the Lord that we are in the hands of God. 🙏

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*By Jim Micheff, President*

## Local Pastor Ministers to Police and First Responders

When the average person gets pulled over for a traffic violation, they don't usually see a ministry opportunity. They grudgingly hand over their license and plead with God for grace. But when Pastor Jermaine Gayle was pulled over, he saw an opportunity for which he had been praying.

**G**ayle, who pastors the East Lansing



church, had been "praying about reaching people of influence in [his] city." Gayle, however, was not expecting his prayer to be answered

through flashing lights. "The Lord answered in an embarrassing way," Gayle says, "I got pulled over for running a stop sign."

Gayle and the police officer struck up a friendly conversation and "after he learned that I was a pastor," Gayle says, "he was kind enough to extend an invitation to do ride-alongs." Gayle accepted, and the friendship turned into an "official invitation to serve as the chaplain for the East Lansing Police department." Gayle's influence and the way he ministered to the officers he encountered proved fruitful.

After serving as the chaplain for the East Lansing Police department, Gayle was extended an invitation to serve as chaplain for the East Lansing Fire department as well. "The Lord had blessed our efforts with the police department," says Gayle, and they shared the impact he was having within their department with other first responders.

Gayle understands that his role is first and foremost for his church, and that the church "is allowing me to serve at both departments in our community." His involvement, however, allows for church members to be involved in several projects conducted by the city. An example is a yearly city-wide food drive, an initiative with which church members are heavily involved. Church members and police officers worked together to deliver collected items to shelters in need.

After the tragic shooting on Michigan State University's campus in February 2023, Gayle's position as chaplain for the police department meant that the church was able to serve the community and the students, traumatized by the unfortunate event. The church opened their doors "as a space for first responders to meet and to go through the process of dealing with the trauma," says Gayle. In addition, "we've also opened up our church to the city after the shooting for students to have a place to also work through what they've experienced." Through Gayle's connection, the

Gayle (left) poses with two church members after participating in a city food drive.





**Top:** Gayle with the Fire Chief (left) and Captain (right).

**Bottom:** Gayle and a police officer pause for a picture while out on the job.



East Lansing church was able to minister to students and first responders after such a tragic incident. The church's ministry was extended because of Gayle's position as chaplain.

Gayle's main duties include, but are not limited to, spending time with the officers as they are working, or doing "ride-alongs," essentially, "riding in a police car with an officer, talking with them, and interacting with the community under certain circumstances," explains Gayle. He has also conducted funerals on behalf of the police department.

Under some circumstances, if there has been a death in the community, Gayle will accompany an officer to a relative's home to "communicate the sad news, while offering some comfort to the individual who has suffered the loss, which often leads to a lasting relationship due our being there for those who mourn," he says.

His main goal is to minister to the officers and first responders themselves, who often see horrible, unsettling scenes on the job. "First responders," Gayle explains, "see a lot of very

"His main goal is to minister to the officers and first responders themselves, who often see horrible, unsettling scenes on the job."

challenging things. You can imagine a house is on fire... a first responder must take that call, they are not just thinking about the fire, they are going to think about the loss too, and often the reflection is, 'I have a family too.'" These difficult moments require support, both mental and psychological, but Gayle explains that the support oftentimes "dives deeper into spiritual support."

Seeing disturbing scenes can cause first responders to engage with important spiritual questions, such as, *Why did God allow this to happen?*, a question to which our unique Adventist belief of the Great Controversy provides a clear and solid answer. Gayle is there to minister to their needs, whether spiritual or not. He is there to help them "to process [what they have encountered] a little bit better."

Gayle explains that, when it comes down to it, his responsibilities are to "be there and listen, to help officers process at times the difficult aspects of their work and other times to engage with them personally about whatever areas or subject matter they would like to discuss, including spirituality. What makes this ministry such a blessing, is that one quickly learns that, because someone wears a uniform, that doesn't mean that they are not in need of spiritual, emotional support and have an earnest desire to know the Lord. What's encouraging to see at times is having the opportunity to pray with an officer before he/she begins their work."

Gayle's ministry has resulted in police officers and first responders becoming involved in church activities, such as an after-school program for children. Recently a first responder personally thanked the church for allowing Gayle to minister to their department. Some officers and first responders have also begun attending church services and are involved in Bible studies. 🙏

By Judy Ringstaff, Communication

# Community Students Attend Adventist School

**It's not uncommon for non-member students to attend an Adventist school, especially considering the current shift in secular culture**

**K**amran Masih, Cedar Lake Elementary principal, participated in a family-friendly triathlon hosted by the Edmore church last summer. Approximately 15 to 20 families joined the event, enjoying the combination of running, biking, and swimming. EJ Wolf, Edmore church pastor, invited Masih to attend with the intention that he could meet potential families and invite them to attend Cedar Lake Elementary.

*“Adventist education is making a significant difference in the lives of students across Michigan.”*

After a brief devotional and prayer, activities commenced. Throughout the day, Masih met every attending family. One family in particular responded positively to Masih's invitation to attend the school. After completing the triathlon, Masih informed them about an upcoming Vacation Bible School (VBS), and the family decided to participate. As Masih spent more time with them, he shared additional information about the school.

“When I speak with these families,” Masih explained, “I highlight that it's a small school, allowing for a low student-teacher ratio and more personalized instruction.” Masih also emphasized that the school is Christian, teaching Christian

values. “When I talk to people,” he added, “I focus on the challenges children face daily, and how knowing Jesus can guide them on the right path.”

Impressed by Masih's introduction, the family enrolled their three children—Aspen, Brooks, and Birch—for the 2023-2024 school year. According to Masih, the students have thrived, and the family has become involved in the local Pathfinder club.

It's not uncommon for non-member students to attend an Adventist school, especially considering the current shift in secular culture.

Adventist education offers a stark contrast to secular ideologies.

Charlotte Green, associate superintendent of schools for the Michigan Conference, explains that

character values are incorporated throughout the day in the Adventist school system. Students learn how to interact with others and with authority, with a general focus that differs from secular schools. The contrast between a classroom where spiritual discussions are the norm and prayer is commonplace and a secular classroom where spiritual topics are taboo is apparent to families considering Adventist education.

Green further elaborates that in an Adventist classroom, each student is treated as an individual with intrinsic value. “We teach our students that they are created by God and how to treat one another with value. They were created; therefore, they have

value." This fundamental concept addresses a common struggle many children face today. Having a firm foundation is of infinite value. "It's very hard in a non-Christian setting to explain why they are valued," Green emphasizes. Teachers in Adventist classrooms can freely discuss spiritual matters during various subjects and guide students in discovering biblical truths for themselves.

Cedar Lake Elementary follows this approach, making every moment an opportunity to guide students to their Bibles and discover truths for

themselves. "We had our first week of prayer recently," Masih notes, "and two of the non-Adventist students expressed their intent to get baptized in the near future. They are all currently engaged in Bible studies."

Adventist education is making a significant difference in the lives of students across Michigan. Cedar Lake Elementary School is one such example. 🙏

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*By Communication Team*

From left to right: Birch, Brooks, and Aspen have all decided to participate in Bible studies after attending the Cedar Lake Elementary school.





# Seventh-day Adventist® Church

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

## NATURE NUGGET Capuchin Monkeys

White-faced capuchin monkeys live in the Central and South American rainforests. My wife and I had the opportunity to see them several times on a recent trip to Costa Rica. These monkeys have distinctive cap-like fur, which gives them their name. Their long tail is used like a fifth leg as they move through the rainforest canopy.

Capuchin monkeys are the “inventors” of the jungle. Their remarkable problem-solving abilities include the use of tools such as rocks and sticks to extract nuts and shellfish. They are considered the smartest of the New World monkeys, a group of primate families that live in Mexico and Central and South America.

In the lush landscape of the rainforest, capuchin monkeys

thrive in tightly knit societies. Led by an alpha male, these groups display a remarkable social structure with distinct roles and responsibilities. Communication within the troop is intricate, involving vocalizations, facial expressions, and body language.



The interconnectedness of capuchin societies reminds us of the strength that arises from collaboration. Our church community benefits the most when we collaborate together, doing God’s will. As we combine our God-given talents and take part in the roles and responsibilities of the congregation, we can accomplish so much more than if each of us tried to do our own thing. 🙌

By Dr. Gordon Atkins, Head Naturalist, Camp Au Sable  
Photo by Dr. Gordon Atkins

## MONTHLY CALENDAR

### February

- 3** PBE Area Level
- 11** VBS Workshop (Office)
- 16-19** CAMPUS Winter Retreat (CAS)
- 19** Office Closed (President's Day)
- 21-25** GLAA Home Leave
- 23-25** Teen Impact (CAS)
- 29-March 3** Rest and Renew (CAS)

### March

- 1** Camp Meeting Registration
- 1-3** Health Ministries Training
- 2** PBE Conference Level
- 7** Summer Camp Registration
- 8-10** MI Tribe Training
- 14-24** GLAA Spring Break
- 15-24** Youth Trip
- 29-31** ACS Retreat
- 29-31** Youth Rush Summit

\*CAS = Camp Au Sable